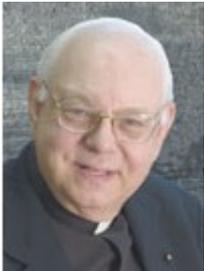


# Want to see abortion made illegal? Be consistent in supporting life



Despite recent legislative actions in the states and a Supreme Court ruling, we still have work to do regarding abortion. The historic 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling is back on the front burner.

Advocates for the right to life and respect for all human life – conception to natural death – hope that these recent developments ultimately will cause the Supreme Court to reverse *Roe*. Hope is based upon the hunch that opposing *Roe* will be two recently appointed associate justices of the Supreme Court, Judges Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh.

Well, we were at a similar moment like in 1992 when, in the Supreme Court, Planned Parenthood contested policies of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, curtailing abortion-on-demand. Pro-life supporters were delighted back then, including the editorial board of *Our Sunday Visitor*. In fact, an OSV editorial at the time predicted that legalized abortion in this country soon would be a thing of the past.

Driving those hopes was the fact that pro-life Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush had appointed three Supreme Court justices considered by everyone to be very conservative in general, and in their philosophy of the law. These individuals included Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony M. Kennedy and David Souter.

O'Connor had been quite active in Arizona Republican politics and the Republican Party. Kennedy was a lifelong, faithful, practicing Catholic, involved in his California parish. Souter

was presumed to be conservative, or President Bush never would have considered him.

It was thought that the decision of the Supreme Court was only a formality. When the case was decided, everyone was surprised, and many pro-life Americans were infuriated, feeling betrayed; O'Connor, Kennedy and Souter voted to sustain *Roe*. Abortion remained legal, as it is today. It was not the first time that Supreme Court justices have dumbfounded people by taking the opposite side to an argument – ones that were thought to be the basic principles of their lives.

Will this happen again? Regardless, if *Roe* is revisited and overturned, many legal observers believe that the result will be to return to what was the case before *Roe* first was ruled; each state legislature will view abortion on its own.

Ultimately, some will outlaw abortion and others will not. Legislatures act on the basis of the popular will, or otherwise legislators lose their jobs. Public opinion will be vitally important. The issue will be a hot topic.

We who honor life will have to work hard to bring others to our position. We can twirl the numbers, but many Americans support at least the option of legal abortion, or they do not care one way or the other. The emphasis, unfortunately, has shifted from the right to life of the unborn to the mother's right to choose. The culture now looks askance on any argument that has traditionally moral roots.

As a priest, three rebuttals often have been thrown at me regarding the Church's steadfast stand on the dignity of life.

First, Catholics say that human life is precious, but many Catholics support the death penalty.

Second, Catholics do not always race to the Church's side when it fights for the quality of life of people who are poor,

oppressed, limited or are refugees from terrors abroad. Catholics are not consistent, people say. Nothing damages our arguments more.

Third, when abortion seems to be the only alternative to resolve an inconvenient pregnancy, even practicing Catholics make exceptions. Every priest has seen this happen.

Therefore, get ready.

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